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Citation Details

Davidova, E. (2020). Circuits of Mobile Workers in the 19th-Century Central Balkans. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften*, 31(1), 48-67.

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Circuits of Mobile Workers in the 19th-Century Central Balkans

Abstract: This article compares the geographic and social mobility of two “lesser known” groups of workers: merchants’ assistants and maidservants. By combining labor mobility, class, and gender as categories of analysis, it suggests that such examples of temporary and return migration opened up new economic possibilities while at the same time reinforcing patriarchal order and increasing social inequality. Such transformative social practice is placed within the broader socio-economic and political fabric of the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman Balkans during the “long 19th century.”

Key Words: Balkans, commercial networks, domestic servants, labor mobility, migration

Throughout the 19th century, the Balkans faced profound economic, social, political, and cultural changes. The Ottoman Empire’s integration into the world economy and modernity pressed it to respond in multiple ways, most notably in the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876).¹ The reforms opened new administrative and economic opportunities to the non-Muslim incipient middle classes. Furthermore, several wars and insurgences led to significant political developments. While the Serbian Revolts (1804–1813, 1815) and the Greek War of Independence (1821–1829) marked the emergence of an autonomous principality and an independent state, it was the Russo–Ottoman War (1877–1878) and the Berlin Congress (1878) that

Accepted for publication after external peer review (double blind)

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1 The Tanzimat is the period of administrative, legal, financial, educational, and military reforms implemented by the government with the intent to modernize the Ottoman Empire. It began with the promulgation of the Edict of Gülhane in 1839 and ended with the proclamation of the constitution in 1876.

redrew the map of the Balkan peninsula by creating two independent states (Serbia and Romania), an autonomous Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia, and a Bulgarian Principality under Ottoman suzerainty. The shrinking Ottoman territories, with pockets of various minorities, stimulated all successor states to adopt nationalism as a strategy to mobilize their existing and potential citizens, whereas wars served as a means for territorial rearrangement. These transformations entailed complex processes of land redistribution, urbanization, and social reordering that affected labor composition and movement.

Labor mobility in the Balkans has usually been researched from the perspective of *gurbet* (*pečalbarstvo*), which focuses on periodic/seasonal labor migrants, such as builders, harvest gatherers and gardeners, within and beyond the Balkans.² More recent studies have traced the influx of rural and marginal groups to cities, as aspects of modernity and nationalism.³ A third stream of scholarly work has examined the Greek diaspora's economic activities and cultural transfers to their homeland.⁴ Yet another set of research has explored early industrialization and composition of labor forces, including women.⁵ In the last two decades, critical studies on family and gender have also offered a productive lens on domestic service.⁶

- 2 There is abundant literature; see, for example, Michel Palairat, *The Migrant Workers in the Balkans and their Villages (18th Century – World War II)*, in: Klaus Roth (ed.), *Handwerk in Mittel- und Südosteuropa. Mobilität, Vermittlung und Wandel im Handwerk des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1987, 23–47; Petko Khristov, *Gurbet i identichnost (Po materiali ot Zapadna Bŭlgaria, Iztochna Sŭrbia i Zapadna Makedonia)* [Seasonal labor and identity (according to materials from West Bulgaria, East Serbia and West Macedonia)], in: *Sociologicheski problemi* 1/2 (2012), 186–187; Keith Brown, *Loyal unto Death. Trust and Terror in Revolutionary Macedonia*, Bloomington 2013.
- 3 Ulrike Freitag/Malte Fuhrmann/Nora Lafi/Florian Riedler (eds.), *The City in the Ottoman Empire. Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, London 2011. Almost every urban history has addressed the issue of the influx of the rural population.
- 4 Amongst the many publications on this issue by Katsiardi-Hering, see Olga Katsiardi-Hering, *Central and Peripheral Communities of the Greek Diaspora: Interlocal and Local Economic, Political, and Cultural Networks in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, in: Minna Rozen (ed.), *Homelands and Diasporas. Greeks, Jews and their Migrations*, London 2008, 169–180; Vassiliki Seirinidou, *Grocers and Wholesalers, Ottomans and Habsburgs, Foreigners and “Our Own.” The Greek Trade Diasporas in Central Europe, Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, in: Suraiya Faruqi/Gilles Veinstein (eds.), *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire*, Paris 2008, 81–95; Evridiki Sifneos, “Cosmopolitanism” as a Feature of the Greek Commercial Diaspora, in: *History and Anthropology* 16/1 (2007), 97–111; Ina Baghdiantz McCabe/Gelina Harlaftis/Ioanna Minoglou (eds.), *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History*, Oxford 2005; Ioanna Minoglou, *The Greek Merchant House of the Russian Black Sea: A Nineteenth-Century Example of a Traders’ Coalition*, in: *International Journal of Maritime History* 10/1 (1998), 61–104; Gelina Harlaftis, *From Diaspora Traders to Shipping Tycoons: The Vagliano Bros*, in: *Business History Review* 81/2 (2007), 237–268; Maria Christina Chatziioannou, *On Merchants’ Agency and Capitalism in the Eastern Mediterranean 1774–1914*, Istanbul 2017.
- 5 Efi Avdela, “To the Most Weak and Needy”: Women’s Protective Labor Legislation in Greece, in: Ulla Wikander/Alice Kessler-Harris/Jane Lewis (eds.), *Protecting Women: Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880–1920*, Urbana 1995; Leda Papastefanaki, *Ergasia, technologia kai fylo stin ellyniki viomichania*. [Labor, Technology and Gender in Greek Industry], Irakleio 2009.
- 6 Suzy Pasleau/Isabelle Schopp (eds.) with Raffaella Sarti, *The Modelization of Domestic Service*. La

This article compares the geographic and social mobility of two “invisible” professional groups: merchants’ assistants and domestic servants who were peripatetic and trained on site. Several aspects are worthy of comparison: social origins, gender roles, travel trajectories, literacy levels, and professional prospects. These two groups have not attracted much scholarly attention because most of them left scant and scattered evidence of their lifestyles. This article explores the following research questions: what do such labor movements reveal about the interactions among various ethno-religious communities? How were gender and class intertwined? What was the impact of the modernizing state (both the late Ottoman Empire and the emerging Balkan nation-states) on such mobile laborers? I argue that such forms of labor mobility contributed to an intermixing of social and ethnic strata, an accumulation of capital, and the emergence of middle classes, but also reinforced the established patriarchal order and increased social inequalities. The intensification of labor circuits during the “long 19th century” was both a result of and an impetus to Ottoman incorporation into the world economy, modernization of administration, advancement of transportation, and expansion of education. I do not claim that merchants’ assistants and servants were not mobile before the 19th century – on the contrary, they were. Like all groups on the move, they adjusted to the economic, social, and political changes. I seek to situate their mobility, however, within the transition from empire to nation-states, as both groups belong to the transitional generation that straddled two worlds and navigated multiethnic interactions, which the subsequent Balkan states tried to erase.

Merchants’ aides’ and servants’ lives of the period offer examples of temporary, circular, and return migration over short, medium, and long distances. Instead of statistical data, I attempt to present a world in a state of flux and to personalize some features of these nameless *femina economica* and *homo economicus*. Through micro-historical exploration of a case study and network analysis on merchants’ aides, and qualitative comparison and close reading of dispersed and fragmented sources about domestic servants, this article will reconstruct some of the moves and actions of those “silent” actors. The sources providing evidence of such people are not left by them but by those “above” them. As Chastagnaret and Raveux have contended, “space is not neutral, it weighs upon the social actors and can be felt or

modélisation du service domestique. Proceedings of the Servant Project, vol. V. Actes du Servant Project, vol. V, Liège 2005; Pothiti Hantzaroula, *Smilevontas tin ypotagi stin Ellada. Oi emmistes oikiakes ergatries to proto misi tou eikostou aionou* [Carving Subjugation. Salaried Maidservants in Greece during the First Half of the 20th Century], Athens 2012; Konstantina Bada/Pothiti Hantzaroula, Family Strategies, Work, and Welfare Policies toward Waged Domestic Labor in Twentieth-Century Greece, in: *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 35 (2017), 17–42; Violeta Hionidou, Domestic Service on Three Greek Islands in the later 19th and early 20th centuries, *The History of the Family* 10/4 (2006), 473–489.

instrumentalized by them in a very unequal way.”⁷ This quotation, as well as other sources, suggests spatial mobility is asymmetrical but such peripatetic lifestyles also provide opportunities for exercising some agency. My discussion below is based on the Tüpchileshtovs, Ottoman merchants whose experiences encapsulate a wealth of significant social and economic changes in the Balkans. Such a focus is not unusual, since most research on Balkan trade and commercial diaspora is based on the examination of specific firms that shed light on the wider context. This case study thus serves as a form of collective social biography because the Tüpchileshtovs’ story is integrated within a broad milieu of merchants. The company engaged in various activities and left a rich archive consisting of approximately 28,000 units of documents covering the period from the 1830s to the 1890s, including the entangled careers of multiple other colleagues.⁸ Therefore, as much as possible, comparisons will be made with other cases.

Networks of Merchants’ Assistants

This section examines the archetypal mobile group: merchants. And more specifically, it focuses on the spatial and social trajectories of commercial aides. While there is abundant research on traders, interest in their assistants has been tangential. Very few of them, such as Stamatis Petrou, an 18th-century commercial aide and future prosperous merchant, have left written traces.⁹ The terms “clerk,” “scribe,” and “secretary” require some qualification however. The job of such assistants was broader and included: maintaining correspondence in several languages, bookkeeping, performing domestic chores, and embarking on regular travels to oversee various business

7 Gérard Chastagnaret/Olivier Raveux, *Penser l’espace: Espace et stratégies industrielles aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles: exploiter le laboratoire méditerranéen* [Thinking about Space: Space and Industrial Strategies in the 18th and 19th Centuries: Exploring the Mediterranean Laboratory], in: *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 48 2/3 (2001), 18–20. See also Maria Christina Chatziioannou, *Networking and Spatial Allocation Around the Mediterranean, Seventeenth–Nineteenth Centuries*, in: *The Historical Review/ La Revue Historique* 7 (2010), 9–13.

8 The main archive is kept at the Bulgarian Historical Archive at the National Library in Sofia. It was moved from Istanbul to Sofia in the 1890s and was bought by the Library in 1930. Konstantin Mutafov, *Arkhivüt na Khristo Tüpchilestov* [The Tüpchilestov’s Archive], *Bülgarska Misül* 2 (1932), 132–139; *Inventaren opis na arkhivite sükhvaniavani v Bülgarski istoricheski arkhiv* [Catalog of the archives kept at the Bulgarian Historical Archive], vol. 1, Sofia 1963, 39–62.

9 Adamantios Korais, one of the most influential Greek scholars, political thinkers, and linguists, had a brief commercial career in Amsterdam in the late 18th century. It was at this time that Stamatis Petrou worked for him. Philippos Iliou (ed.), *Grammata apo to Amsterntam* [Letters from Amsterdam], Athens 1976.

undertakings.¹⁰ Beginning a commercial career as a company's clerk was a typical path for many Balkan traders, something like a rite of passage. Such was the case of Andreas Syngros, a prosperous banker and entrepreneur in Constantinople, who began as an employee in a commercial firm in the 1840s.¹¹ Similarly, in the Habsburg Empire, there emerged a class of professional commercial secretaries among the Balkan traders who maintained regular correspondence and exchange of information between Southeast and Central Europe.¹² An epistolary guide of 1837, containing much earlier models that originated from the Habsburg Empire, disclosed the process of hiring clerks and provided sample contracts and letters. For instance, a certain Spyridon Iannou employed Iannis Petrou for three years. The latter had to maintain the accounts and all the ledgers correctly and would have a salary of eight hundred gurus.¹³ Another version of a similar contract was more specific: appointment for one year with requirements to apply double-entry bookkeeping, to keep all ledgers, and to maintain correspondence in Greek and German.¹⁴ These two examples and others suggest less mobility and more sedentary specialization in managerial skills. By contrast, it seems that in the Ottoman Empire this group was more fluid in terms of their tasks and essentially more peripatetic, as the following Tüpchileshtov case demonstrates.

The company of Khristo Tüpchileshtov (1808–1875), an Ottoman trader-cum-tax farmer and banker of Bulgarian origin, offers a rare glimpse into the system of recruiting aides, their physical mobility, and in some cases their social advancement. The firm was established by his father in the 1800s in Kalofer, a small mountainous village which specialized in animal husbandry and related products.¹⁵ The disbanding of the Janissary Corps in 1826 created not only a new omnivorous clientele for foodstuff and clothes – the army – but also eliminated the ayans (local notables) and janissaries as competition in commerce. In the late 1830s, Tüpchileshtov's

10 Having several “scribes” was a common practice. For example, Markos Kalogeras, a merchant from Mykonos, had more than one “grammatikos” to keep up with the high volume of his correspondence, but also used them for multiple other tasks. Vasilis Kremmydas, *Emporoi kai emporika diktya stachronia tou eikosiena* (1820–1835). *Kikladites emporoi kai ploiktes* [Merchants and Trade networks (1820–1835). Merchants and ship owners from the Cyclades], Athens 1996, 20–21.

11 In 1852, he was already a partner in an international company. Andreas Syngros, *Apomnimonevmata* [Memoirs], vol. A, Athens 1908, 168–172.

12 Olga Katsiardi-Hering, *Southeastern European Migrant Groups between the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires. Multilateral Social and Cultural Transfers from the Eighteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries*, in: Harald Heppner/Eva Posch (eds.), *Encounters in Europe's Southeast. The Habsburg Empire and the Orthodox World in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Bochum 2012, 135–162, 145 and the cited literature.

13 The guruş, a silver coin, was a standard unit of account until 1844; it was called the piastre in European sources.

14 Michail Christidis, *Epistolarion koinophelēs*. [Useful Epistolary Manual], Bucharest 1837, 260–268.

15 Nikola Nachov, *Kalofer v minaloto* [Kalofer in the Past], Sofia 1990.

office was moved to Istanbul (Constantinople, Tsarigrad).¹⁶ It is not a coincidence that the firm's capital increased in the 1840s, since there were significant macro-economic changes, such as the Balta Limani Trade Convention in 1838, the abolition of monopolies on grain trade, the opening of navigation on the lower Danube, the Tanzimat reforms and especially the changes in taxation from 1839 to 1841. During the 1860s to 1870s – the company's halcyon days – capital turnover was between seven to twelve million gurus, predominantly due to participation in tax farming, state deliveries, and banking. According to my estimation, the firm had contacts in 72 locations; the number of correspondents was approximately 297. In ethnic terms, the picture consisted of: 53 percent Bulgarians, 17 percent Muslims, 15 percent Greeks, five percent Armenians, five percent Jews, and five percent foreign and unidentified traders.¹⁷ These figures are similar to those of other big companies located in the Ottoman capital, reflect the rich multiethnic tapestry in the area, and serve as a representation of entrepreneurial versatility and multidirectional networks and exchanges of various intensity.¹⁸ Such numbers indicate a vast mobilization of people and resources through time.

Consequently, Tüpchileshtov's company functioned with the help of many employees, including clerks at the main office and others who were charged with tasks requiring trips within the Ottoman Empire and beyond. For instance, between 1851 and 1875, the company hired 24 employees, eight of whom were "scribes," one was a Turk, five were manservants, and others were described as debt collectors.¹⁹ There was internal mobility and some debt collectors became office clerks and vice versa. Six or 25 percent of all staff originated from Tüpchileshtov's native village, and included three distant relatives. In 1874, one of his nephews was dispatched to Sofia

¹⁶ In most cases, I use current geographic names, unless they are part of a quotation.

¹⁷ Discerning ethnic affiliation is a challenging task. These percentages were calculated based on the language of the source, names, and explicit mention in the texts.

¹⁸ The scholarship on networks is vast. See, for example, Mark Granovetter, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, *The American Journal of Sociology* 78/6 (1973), 1360–1380; Kremmydas, *Emporoi kai emporika diktya*, 1996; McCabe/Harlaftis/Minoglou (eds.) *Diaspora*, 2005; Chatziioannou, *Networking*, 2010; Elena Frangakis-Syrett, *Market Networks and Ottoman-European Commerce, c. 1700–1825*, *Oriente Moderno Nuova Serie XXV (LXXXVI)/1* (2006), 109–128; Ioanna Minoglou/Helen Louri, *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks in the Black Sea and Greece, 1870–1917*, *The Journal of European Economic History* 26/1 (1997), 69–104; Stamatopoulos has applied Weberian terminology to express the multitude of both vertical and particularly horizontal social networks and their transformation into "power networks." Moreover, he has interpreted the interactions amongst the high clergy, bourgeoisie, and the neo-phanariotes as competing and shifting 'interest groups' or 'status groups,' based on both economic and symbolic capital, whose influence inside and outside the Rum millet continued. Dimitris Stamatopoulos, *From Machiavelli to the Sultans. Power Networks in the Ottoman Imperial Context*, *Historein* 5, (2005), 76–93.

¹⁹ Bŭlgarski istoricheski arkhiv [Bulgarian Historical Archive at the National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius"], hereafter BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 9036, 54; IA 9017, 11–12; IA 9022, 40–41; IA 9003, 46; IA 8994, 430–431.

to manage the delivery of clarified butter to the imperial palace; this was a multi-ethnic collaboration with local Jewish and Muslim entrepreneurs. The nephew also collected outstanding debts in the surrounding villages.²⁰ While engaged in large deals, such as the state meat deliveries to the palace in 1865, Tüpchileshtov also hired temporary employees (some of them relatives of his aides) who went to buy sheep in various locations in Bessarabia, Wallachia, Dobruja, and Thrace.²¹ Such was the case of Mincho Nikolov from Kalofer, a temporary aide entrusted with buying sheep in Stara Zagora; he also traveled to Pleven and various villages around Plovdiv, Kazanlık, and Chirpan for the same reason.²² Another good illustration of similar mobile tasks is provided by a clerk who was sent intermittently to Izmir, Mersin, and Adana to arrange the supply of cotton between 1866 and 1868, and for a month to Kalofer (1867) to collect arrears.²³ Yet another aide was dispatched to Trabzon (1866), Gabrovo, and Ruse (1868) with similar tasks.²⁴ Most of these trips lasted from one to three months and involved transactions such as state delivery, tax farming, and export of grain for Europe. It was after the Tanzimat that more non-Muslim entrepreneurs, like Tüpchileshtov, were able to join the multiethnic networks that coordinated circuits of money, goods, and people (including clerks).

This mobile lifestyle was expected of assistants, the majority of whom were young, single males who were accumulating both social and economic capital. Upon reaching a certain age, many of them became sedentary merchants and married.²⁵ As in the case of female servants, as discussed in the next section, this was a life-cycle job for the young. Nevertheless, a successful career as an aide would frequently lead to ownership of an independent commercial firm. Often, however, the marriage of male traders was postponed until they had accumulated enough money to support a family. A case in point was the matrimonial model, which Dušan Popović called the “Greek bridegroom,” suggesting an older male and a younger female of marriageable age.²⁶ In comparison to scribes, maidservants were expected to marry

20 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 4881; IA 4887.

21 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 4008, 4017, 4027.

22 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 4017.

23 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 8989, 220; IA 8981, 376–377; IA 3266.

24 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 8989, 94–95, IA 4862, IA 4866.

25 One letter contains an invitation for a wedding ceremony, which was written as a post scriptum, “Please tell Ivancho Getsov that we will definitely have our humble wedding on 2 February [1869]. And I hope you will allow him to attend it,” it reads. It appears that a former scribe was going to marry and he asked his boss for permission to allow another employee to attend it. Tsentralen dŕzhaven arkhiv [State Central Archive], f. 253k, 1, a.e. 33, 10.

26 For example, Andrija Dada, a Belgrade merchant, married at the age of 42; his wife was 16 years old; Guša Popović of Smederevo married at the age of 33, when his wife was just 14. See D.J. Popović, *O Cincarima. Prilozi pitanju postanka našeg građanskog društva* [On Tsintsars. Contributions to the formation of our civil society], Beograd, 2000, 71, 85.

early. This younger age for women is an indicator of the social expectations concerning procreation and housework duties typical in patriarchal societies. Another common characteristic between the two groups is the paternalistic environment wherein both clerks and servants were incorporated into the larger family. The 18th-century merchant X.-A. Batis, for example, called his employees “kopeli” (boy, servant) instead of “doulos” (slave, servant). The term illustrates a patriarchal relationship rather than one based on age.²⁷ In other cases, the salaried clerks addressed the head of the firm as “Father.”²⁸

Not surprisingly, there was a hierarchy and pay difference among all the staff was based on the way aides were recruited (i.e. through kinship relations, local origin, and colleagues’ recommendations) and the tasks they performed. For instance, Tüpchileshtov’s ledgers of 1849 disclose that a scribe received two thousand guruş for one year, a servant one thousand, and another servant five hundred guruş.²⁹ Another account book from 1862 demonstrates even more clearly the pay disparity: a debt collector who was a relative was remunerated 12,916 guruş per year; a scribe was paid 3,140 guruş; and a servant 2,274 guruş.³⁰ The latter was later employed to collect debts as well. If one compares these salaries, it becomes clear that work involving travel was better paid. One explanation is that often it included a certain percentage of the payments from debt collection. Another reason is that travel was not always safe (especially with cash) and entailed high risks. Even though trust was an important aspect of the job, some of those employees were not above deception: for example, the brother of one of the abovementioned scribes counterfeited Tüpchileshtov’s signature and tried to obtain cash from one of his commercial partners in Bucharest.³¹ Such concerns may have motivated the Arie family, Jewish entrepreneurs in Samokov, who used only family members for transactions involving the transfer of large sums.³²

Such business trips were sometimes used as a cover for political missions. In 1862, the Niš governor’s report contended that Tüpchileshtov incited the region against the Greek bishop in 1861/1862 via his employee Sava Stanov, who was sent there to collect debts. The sources show that Stanov also travelled to Niš and Pirot

27 Vasilis Kremmydas, *Emporikes praktikes sto telos tis Tourkokratias. Mykoniates emporoi kai ploikites* [Commercial practices at the end of Turkish rule. Traders and ship owners from Mykonos], Athens 1993, 198–201.

28 Minoglou, *Greek Merchant House*, (1998), 71.

29 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 9036, 5.

30 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 9022, 40–41. Unfortunately, the ledgers do not mention salaries for female domestics. One probable explanation could be that they were not considered salaried employees and their labor continued to be seen as unqualified, or they received remuneration in kind.

31 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 642.

32 Muzei Samokov [Museum of Samokov], Nauchen arkhiv [Research Archive], *Khronika na semeistvo Arie* [Chronicle of the Arie family], 11, a.e. 1, 25.

in 1860.³³ Along the same lines, other documents suggest that many scribes in the Ottoman capital were politically engaged. Two other clerks from Tüpchileshtov's company even moved to Russia to avoid arrest, allegedly due to involvement in anti-Ottoman plots. According to one memoir, young secretaries and students in Ottoman schools organized parties on Saturday nights when their masters left Balkapan khan (a commercial building in Istanbul where the offices of many merchants were located), where they danced and sang revolutionary songs.³⁴ The commercial clerks' training on the job and peripatetic socialization thus exposed them to the wider Ottoman world. One can expand the meaning of what Benedict Anderson called "educational pilgrimages"³⁵ by emphasizing the short-term kinetic (but also political) aspect of such jobs.

Hence, there is no surprise in the subsequent spatial and social mobility of some of the assistants who worked in this company: 37 percent of all staff later became merchants. In 1863, the aforesaid Stanov asked his boss for a loan of ten thousand guruş, which together with his savings would help him to start his own commercial company.³⁶ Such paths to "successful" professional realization could be explained by the fact that many clerks were immersed not only in existing commercial networks, but were also exposed to a "shared business culture".³⁷ Like the abovementioned Stamatis Petrou, Andreas Syngros, the founder of the Vaglianos company, also began his career as a salaried clerk.³⁸ Yet others had different trajectories: one of them, who came from Tŭrnovo, studied in Bucharest before arriving in Constantinople. After several years in the Ottoman capital, he returned to Tŭrnovo and became a treasurer for the municipal council.³⁹ Another assistant, Stoian Karaminkov, was employed in 1848/1849 and also returned to his native Kalofer, where he was elected to the local municipality board.⁴⁰ His experience as a secretary, however, paid off in another way: in 1850, together with his brother, he published the first commercial guide on double-entry bookkeeping in Bulgarian. The book became a merchants' bestseller.

Although during the Ottoman period most of the above-cited clerks advanced to become independent merchants, their path was interrupted. The post-Ottoman

33 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 8980, 11.

34 Nachov, Kalofer, 1990, 82–83, 356; Khristo Stambolski, *Avtobiografia, dnevnitsi i spomeni* [Autobiography, Diaries, and Memoirs], Vol. 1, Sofia 1927, 388–389.

35 On the unintended role of colonial schools in fostering nationalist feelings and networks, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 2006, 140.

36 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 4980.

37 Chatziioannou, *On Merchants' Agency*, 2017, 37.

38 Minoglou, *Greek Merchant House*, (1998), 80.

39 Ogniana Mazhdakova, *Vŭzrozhdenetsŭt Stefan Penev Akhtar*. [The Revival Activist Stefan Penev Akhtar], Sofia 1985, 146–147.

40 Nachov, Kalofer, 1990, 400.

career of many of them entailed transfer of their managerial skills to the bureaucratic domain. For instance, a scribe and an office manager (1861–1871), originally from the town of Sliven, returned there in the 1880s and served as a judge. Another example is Stoil Popov, a former employee of the same company, who became a clerk in a court in Ruse (1878).⁴¹ Most of the staff employed by Tüpchileshtov's company after the Russo–Ottoman War in 1877/1878 quit trade and moved to Eastern Rume-
lia and the Bulgarian Principality. There, they joined both places' swelling admin-
istrations, but kept changing locations between Plovdiv and Sofia, the respective capitals. Therefore, they moved from small mountain towns to the cosmopolitan Constantinople and then back to their native places or other medium-size towns. It seems not only did the clerks' mobile lifestyle persist in their subsequent jobs, but their prior experience also made them adept at acquiring further peripatetic occu-
pations. On the other hand, the sources about women domestics' post-Ottoman employment and transfer of skills remain silent. It seems that the informal accumu-
lation of their cultural capital was transferable mostly in the private sphere, since the accepted trajectory for their "successful" professional realization was marriage.

In sum, it was precisely the Ottoman and post-Ottoman social context of a world in the process of economic integration into capitalism, of building modern bureau-
cratic structures, and of expanding transport and communication that nurtured such intensification of mobility. Again, I do not claim that there was no travel in the pre-industrial world, but rather that the combination of three factors: the new legal and financial opportunities provided by the Tanzimat, the presence of Jewish, Arme-
nian, and Muslim networks in tandem with Greek commercial diaspora, and the application of complex bookkeeping and multilingual skills meant that an increas-
ing number of non-Muslim merchants and their employees engaged in a variety of economic enterprises involving multiethnic partners and multidirectional business travel.⁴² While the owners of such companies led a sedentary lifestyle, it was their clerks who were the peripatetic agents who maintained these complex webs of con-
tacts. Additionally, the expansion of new means of transportation furthered these kinetic activities within the extant late Ottoman and national frameworks. Thus, mobility in space was a means of creating social capital,⁴³ which later also produced

41 BIA-NBKM, f. 6, IA 20933/53.

42 There is abundant research on similar multiethnic networks in Constantinople, Salonica, and particularly Izmir. For a careful analysis of both cooperation and competition, see Elena Frangakis-Syrett, *Implementation of the 1838 Anglo-Turkish Convention on Izmir's Trade: European and Minority Merchants*, *New Perspectives on Turkey* 7 (1992), 91–112; Chatziioannou, *On Merchants' Agency*, 2017, 67–71.

43 Here I refer to Bourdieu's definition: "Social capital as made up of social obligations ('social connections')." Pierre Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*, in: John G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York 1986, 241–258, 243. On social structures

a blend of economic and political benefits. Moreover, this physical mobility often led to embourgeoisement and changes in lifestyle, as the following section will discuss.

Domestic Servants: Gendered Mobility

Another group of “invisible” laborers, rarely mentioned in primary sources, comprises servants. Their mobility is usually presented as unidirectional rural-urban migration. They are often called “silent” subjects because documentation does not express their voices, and because their “silence” is also representative of women’s position in society at the time.⁴⁴ That is why this section compiles information from a variety of materials that reveal a more complex picture of servants’ moves and their social and ethnic interactions.

In Western Europe, domestic service and apprenticeship have often been compared for both their similarities and differences.⁴⁵ Yet within the Ottoman context, most attention has been paid to guilds’ (esnaf) relationships with the state, principles of production, territorial and ethnic organization, and the decline of esnaf in the 19th century.⁴⁶ Often, rural-urban migration in the Balkans has been interpreted as coming from demographic pressure on esnaf regulations and from expansion of wool textile production (abacılık, the production of and trade in rough woolen cloth).⁴⁷ For example, in Plovdiv (Phippoupolis, Filibe), the arrival of rural (male) apprentices, who also lived in the households of their masters and performed domestic chores, especially among the abacı guild, often led to marriages to daughters or relatives of their masters.⁴⁸ This marriage strategy could be seen as a way of circumventing the increased regulation in the late 18th century which aimed to protect the masters’ privileges. Accordingly, in 1789, journeymen were prohibited from entering into partnerships with their masters.⁴⁹ Along the same lines, a recent study

and social agency with regards to migration, see also Christiane Harzig/Dirk Hoerder with Donna Gabaccia, *What is Migration History?*, Cambridge 2010, 78–83.

44 Bada/Hantzaroula, *Family Strategies*, (2017), 17–22; Hantzaroula, *Smilevontas tin ypotagi*, 2012, 24.

45 Raffaella Sarti, Conclusion. Domestic Service and European Identity, in: Pasleau/Schopp (eds.), *Modelization*, 2005, 200.

46 Halil Inalcık/Donald Quataert (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*. Vol. 2, 1300–1914, Cambridge 1994, 586–595, 696–702. The concept of the guilds’ decline is critiqued by Quataert, *ibid.*, 890–898. See also Nikolai Todorov, *The Balkan City 1400–1900*, Seattle 1983, 108–124, 207–227; Michael Palaret, *The Balkan Economies c. 1800–1914. Evolution without Development*, Cambridge 1997, 81–82.

47 Todorov, *Balkan City*, 1983, 118–119; Palaret, *Balkan Economies*, 1997, 72–73.

48 Nikolai Genchev, *Vüzrozhdenskiat Plovdiv (Prinos v Bŭlgarskoto dukhovno vŭzrazhdane)*. [Plovdiv during the National Revival. (Contribution to the Bulgarian Cultural Revival)], Plovdiv 1981, 37.

49 Todorov, *Balkan City*, 1983, 221–225.

of generations of immigrants to Plovdiv has demonstrated that these population movements were not just short-term migrations from the neighboring countryside during the tumultuous period from the 1790s to the 1820s, as is commonly suggested, but remained quite prevalent until the mid-19th century.⁵⁰

Like apprenticeship, domestic service was also intricately related to mobility and migration. In patriarchal societies, servants lived with, and were usually considered part of, the family. For instance, in Athens, the Greek merchant Christodoulos Efthymiou had a household in which the number of servants and their family increased from two in 1838 to 51 (31 males and 20 females) by 1846. Nineteen of them, mostly women, originated from the islands, such as Andros, Naxos, Ydra; six were from Rumelia, three from Peloponnesus, and three from Epirus. Women were usually paid between 15 to 18 drachmas, men between 24 to 25 drachmas per month. The latter would buy provisions and do the heavy jobs and the former would cook and take care of the house. This arrangement provides an illustration of what some scholars have called “gendered patterns of exploitation.”⁵¹ Efthymiou’s ledger discloses that he provided all servants with a salary, shelter, uniforms, gifts, and even payments for a doctor.⁵² The documents reveal not only the expectations that a boss provide patriarchal responsibilities, but also the gender divisions between public and private spheres across the classes. As Raffaella Sarti has noted, male domestic servants were also used as a sign to display “the necessary accoutrements of a noble life-style” from the 16th century onwards.⁵³ From the 18th century onwards, as other researchers have pointed out, domestic service became more feminized across Europe and the Ottoman Empire, and more urban-based with the increased influx of rural women.⁵⁴ Research on Greece demonstrates how, from the second half of the 19th century onwards, the emerging elite and middle classes hired more servants in their households, as in the case of Athens.⁵⁵ The bourgeois urban model of family and morality was founded on the strict division of space, time, and labor. In other words, both

50 Andreas Lyberatos, *Oikonomia, Politiki kai Ethniki Ideologia. I diamorphosi ton ethnikon kommation sti Philippoupoli tou 19ou aiona*. [Economy, Politics and National Ideology. The Formation of National Parties in the 19th Century Philippoupolis], Irakleio 2009, 53–57.

51 Krassimira Daskalova/Susan Zimmermann, *Women’s and Gender History*, in: Irina Livezeanu/Arpad von Klimó (eds.), *The Routledge History of East Central Europe Since 1700*, London/New York 2017, 286.

52 Eftychia Liata, *Times kai agatha stin Athina (1839–1846). Mia martyria apo to katasticho tou emporou Christodoulou Efthymiou* [Prices and Goods in Athens. Evidence from the Ledger of the Merchant Christodoulos Eftimios], Athens 1984, 50–51.

53 Sarti, *Conclusion*, 2005, 216.

54 Margaret A. Hunt, *Women in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Harlow/London 2010, 173.

55 For instance, the number of women domestics doubled from 1907 to 1928 in Athens, reaching 21 % of all women in the work force. Bada/Hantzaroula, *Family Strategies*, (2017), 18, 25, 36; Hionidou, *Domestic Service*, (2006), 477.

economic and non-economic factors led to the expansion of domestic service and its feminization, which in turn exacerbated gender and class inequalities.

As mentioned above, information about maidservants in the Ottoman Balkans is fragmented and derives mostly from wills. More evidence exists about female domestic workers in Plovdiv: the majority were girls from the surrounding villages, just like the apprentices who joined the guilds during that period.⁵⁶ In the early 19th century, the Plovdiv Church Codex shows that many wills, of both male and female benefactors, contained donations for their servants. Samples of testaments usually included a stipulation about giving money and furnishings for dowry to the maids. A case in point was the will of a certain Konstantin who in 1830 provided for his two female servants five hundred and two hundred gurus, respectively.⁵⁷ In another instance, Maria, the maid of the late Theodosia, was bequeathed blankets, a carpet, pots and pans, silk shirts, towels, and bedsheets.⁵⁸ Other documents, as in the case of hiring scribes, bespeak the contractual relations between all the parties involved: employers, parents, husbands, and even the maids themselves. For example, in 1838, a note was “signed” by a maid and her husband, both illiterate.⁵⁹ There is another contract for employing a female cook who was from the village of Valeni and worked for seven years.⁶⁰ Also, a certain Angelina confirmed that according to her contract, she had received all the clothes and money that she had been promised. The document also mentioned that she was from a nearby village.⁶¹ Thus, all these sources corroborate a common European trend of rural–urban labor migration, mainly over short distances, for both craftsmen and servants. While the promotion of male apprentices to journeymen and to masters demonstrates professional hierarchy and a clearly delineated path to social mobility, often accompanied by upward marriage and permanent resettlement, the situation seems to be reversed in the case of maids.

Evidence, albeit scarce, does not show either professional promotion or a trend for marriage into richer families in an urban environment for maidservants. The mention of modest dowries suggests that women domestics worked to earn their dowries and often returned to their villages.⁶² It is commonly assumed that they brought back some urban customs and notions of domesticity, which were trans-

56 Genchev, *Vüzrozhdenskiat Plovdiv*, 1981, 37.

57 Ivan Snegarov, *Grütski kodeks na Plovdivskata mitropolia*. [Greek Codex of the Plovdiv Metropolitanate], in: *Sbornik na Bülgarskata Akademia na Naukite* XLI/2 (1946), 310–311.

58 *Ibid.*, 222.

59 *Ibid.*, 371.

60 Christidis, *Epistolarion*, 1837, 418–420.

61 Snegarov, *Grütski kodeks*, (1946), 377.

62 Hionidou, *Domestic Service*, (2006), 479; Khristov, *Gurbet i identichnost*, (2012), 191–192.

mitted to their children and other family members of various generations.⁶³ While merchants' aides often developed some form of occupational career in the public sphere, women domestics were supposed to have a family trajectory: from the patriarchal control of the parents' household to same in the master's and also in the husband's house. Furthermore, while learning housework skills was considered "useful," female servants were also subjected to class control. For example, they were rarely allowed to keep household budgets, as middle-class mistresses did, and were thus deprived of acquiring the associated managerial skills.

On the other hand, maidservants crossed confessional, ethnic, and national boundaries. According to the Russian traveler Maria Karlova, who visited the Ottoman Balkans in the late 1860s, rich Bulgarian families in Macedonia would commonly "buy" Turkish girls as maids from poor parents, so that their children could learn Turkish. She also claimed that Christians did not "sell" their girls but rather sent them to work for wages, as was the case in Russia.⁶⁴ Some of Karlova's information should be treated with caution; however, her account bears witness to processes of ethnic and religious interactions while the social order was kept intact. In a similar vein, the Plovdiv maids from the surrounding Bulgarian villages often served richer Greek and Hellenized households.⁶⁵ It was common for these newcomers to urban culture to end up with a Hellenized name too. For instance, Vasilka from Haskovo became Vassiliki; after her master died and she lost her job in a Christian household, she served in various harems.⁶⁶ An interesting case of serving a foreign upper-class household is that of two Orthodox nuns from the Kalofer convent. They were servants for a short period in Lieutenant Colonel Spokoisky-Frantzevich's house in the town of Lovech. Subsequently, their former master became a generous donor and supported the convent.⁶⁷ Another example of a mobile woman servant

63 Some authors have identified a common characteristic, "servant subjectivity," that was transferred to the maids' subsequent lives. Hantzaroula, *Smilevontas tin ypotagi*, 2012, 57.

64 M. Karlova, *Turetzkaya provintziya i eya sel'skaya i gorodskaya zhizn'. Puteshestvie po Makedonii i Albanii* [Rural and Urban Life in the Turkish Province. Travel in Macedonia and Albania], in: *Vestnik Evropy* 5/3 (1870), 751–752.

65 On the process of (auto-)Hellenization as a strategy of socio-economic advancement for newcomers in Plovdiv, see Raymond Detrez, *Relations between Greeks and Bulgarians in the Pre-Nationalist Era: the Gudilas in Plovdiv*, in: Dimitris Tziovas (ed.), *Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment*, Aldershot 2003, 30–43; Evguenia Davidova, "Graecomans" into Bulgarians: Shifting Perceptions of Greek-Bulgarian Interethnic Marriages in the Nineteenth Century, *Balkanologie* XIV/1–2 (Décembre 2012) <http://balkanologie.revues.org/index2342.html> (5 September 2019).

66 Konstantin Moravenov, *Pametnik na plovdivskoto khristiansko naselenie v grada i za obshtite zavedenia po proiznosno predanie* [Memorial of the Plovdiv Christian Population and its Public Institutions], Plovdiv 1984, 60–61.

67 Valentina Drumeva, *Devicheskii manastir "Sv.Vüvedenie Bogorodichno" i metosite v Kalofer* [The Convent "Presentation" and the convents in Kalofer], Aton 1998, 101.

was described in the Notarial Act Book of the British Consulate in Varna. A certain Helena Ivan, a native of Tŭrnovo, was a housekeeper to James Jones, a British subject who was employed by the Varna–Rusçuk Railway.⁶⁸ She not only moved among three urban locations, but was also exposed to cultural practices in a middle-class foreign household. Although she was illiterate, she was able to serve as a witness in court regarding property that had been stolen from her master.

In the 1860s, the American Protestant missionaries in the Balkans also hired local servants.⁶⁹ These young girls often had contact with both the children and mistresses of the house. In short, in the Balkans, as in the rest of Europe, domestic service was a channel for inter-generational transmission of knowledge and expertise as well as for cultural intermixing between social classes and geographic regions.⁷⁰ It seems that women domestics were more exposed to rich families from various ethnicities than both the male apprentices and the merchants' aides. The latter were part of formal multiethnic networks while the female servants had more informal contact with diverse cultural and social practices at the level of daily routines. Yet while these encounters are usually interpreted as influence moving directionally from the middle to the lower classes, some travel accounts alluded to the converse too. For example, in her visit to Kavala (1861), Mary Walker lamented the fate of English consuls in the Levant who:

[...] frequently marry ladies of the country, whose tastes and modes of life quite unfit them for subsequently settling in England; their children are generally brought up by their mothers in Greek or Roman Catholic Church, and are in constant and injurious contact with native servants; so the family quickly becomes 'Levantine,' and their children are in danger of losing the healthy standard of English principle, and the traditions of home.⁷¹

While the quotation fits neatly into the Orientalist canon, the sense of anxiety about cultural "contamination" expressed by a representative of the English middle classes is particularly interesting. This is exactly the opposite view to that of the above-mentioned Karlova, who observed an intentional strategy for learning the Turkish language from maidservants. Both travel accounts suggest two-way interactions and bear witness to mobility at both ends of the social ladder: local (female) servants and

68 UK National Archives – Foreign Office, 388/44, 9–11.

69 Even one of the wives was criticized for hiring two servants. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, *Domestic Frontiers. Gender, Reform, and American Interventions in the Ottoman Balkans and the Near East*, Amherst/Boston 2013, 43.

70 Sarti, *Conclusion*, 2005, 206.

71 Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London 1864, 15.

foreign middle-class ladies. Nevertheless, such intermixing between cultures was always marked by the reigning hierarchical order.

As the century advanced, the development of an urban service sector and attention to its ethnic composition became more discernible. There were two requests to the Belgrade municipality to obtain a license for an enterprise intended to supply domestic help in 1868 and 1875.⁷² It is worth noting the emergence of such specialized companies and how they tried to combine market and monitoring functions with respect to ethnic labor mobility. For example, one of them suggested that such a service would regulate the (illegal) influx of migrants who were looking for such jobs. The documents not only hinted at population movement but are also instructive about changing lifestyles: they made distinctions between official and simple coachmen, and various types of female cooks. This process of diversification and feminization of domestic labor occurred in tandem with increased control. In Greece, for instance, domestic service was not addressed in labor legislation but was affected by policing that treated servants as a danger to middle-class property and morality.⁷³

The Bulgarian Principality, a newcomer to the post-Ottoman nation-states, also approached domestic labor (and the threat of free mobility) through regulatory policy. “The Rule for Domestic Servants in Sofia” (1888), originally adopted in 1883, is quite informative. It stipulated not only the establishment of servants’ ID booklets but also a special institution: the “Bureau for control over domestic servants” at the Sofia municipality. Thus, only five years after the emergence of the Bulgarian Principality, the spatial mobility of servants was already strictly regulated. For example, article nine stated that a servant could not leave even the courtyard without his master’s permission.⁷⁴ “The Rule for Servants in Ruse” (1901) is similar. It lists 13 different forms of service from cook to coachman to nanny to guard for fields and vineyards. Labor of this nature was also under firm control: an ID booklet was issued by the municipal council every year. Unlike the rule in Sofia, in Ruse there were free but obligatory and regular medical checkups. This kind of policy is similar to Michel Foucault’s concept of biopower,⁷⁵ but there was also added impetus created by the nationalist anxieties of the newly established nation-states. Thus, the job permit was meant to serve as both proof of national citizenship (foreigners were not eligible)

72 Branka Prpa (ed.), *Živeti u Beogradu. Dokumenta uprave grada Beograda*. [Living in Belgrade. Documents of the City Government], Vol. 4, Belgrade 2006, 277, 299–301.

73 Bada/Hantzaroula, *Family Strategies* (2017), 27, 35.

74 *Pravilnik i knjižka za domashnite slugi v stolitsata* [Rule and Booklet for the Domestic Servants in the Capital], Sofia 1888, 3–4.

75 Michel Foucault, “Society must be defended”: *Lectures at College de France, 1975–76*, New York 2003.

and evidence of acceptable “moral behavior.” Moreover, unemployed servants had to show means of livelihood for more than two weeks, otherwise they would be persecuted by the police as vagabonds.⁷⁶ The document is quite instructive regarding the attempt by the young Bulgarian state to monitor the ethnic influx into cities, their occupational activities, and their physical mobility within the urban space. Not surprisingly, the state also conferred more power to employers: they kept the employees’ ID booklet; they had control over requests for medical checkups; they had the right to inspect servants’ personal belongings, and the right to discharge them.⁷⁷

These forms of monitoring were aimed specifically at the lower classes and privacy was a concept that did not apply to servants. Additionally, the various restrictions were designed to protect middle-class control over the property regime as well as bourgeois morality. Later regulations also involved philanthropic, and particularly Eastern Orthodox, associations which collaborated with the police to address faults of moral behavior committed by female servants as a result of their exposure to the vices common to urban life.⁷⁸ Other voluntary organizations, such as the Near East Relief and the Patriotic Society in Greece, also contributed to maintaining paternalistic control over servants, especially migrant children and girls.⁷⁹ On the other hand, merchants’ aides, who were still part of the hierarchical system, were not subjected to these forms of monitoring and sanctioning. On the contrary, as mentioned above, they were rewarded with higher wages while traveling. Again, intertwined forms of labor mobility, class, and gender affected household servants and merchants’ aides in disparate ways.

Some (poor) regions “specialized” in the provision of domestic help, which became a sort of “survival strategy” for families with several children. For example, the villages around Sofia supplied young girls to serve as maids in middle-class families in the Bulgarian capital. In 1920, seventy percent of all girls from Vakarrel between 14 and 20 years of age were employed, mainly in Sofia.⁸⁰ The “Servants’ Market” there became an economic institution in the urban space and was organized twice a year for two weeks. The girls were usually brought by their parents, often the mother, and it was the parents who received their wages and used them for dowries. When the maids reached the age of 15 or 16, typically the mothers took them back to their villages to marry them.⁸¹ This practice of life-cycle urban employ-

76 *Pravilnik i knizhka na domashnite slugi v gr. Ruse* [Rule and Booklet for the Domestic Servants in Ruse], Ruse 1901, 1–23.

77 *Ibid.*, 4–8.

78 See, for example, *Otchet za deinostta na pravoslavno khristiansko druzhestvo “Sv. Vasilii Veliki” prez 1939 godina*. [Report of the Orthodox Society “St. Basil the Great” for the 1939], Sofia 1940.

79 Hantzaroula, *Smilevontas tin ypotagi*, 2012, 32.

80 Palaret, *Migrant Workers*, 1937, 34–35.

81 Khristov, *Gurbet i identichnost*, (2012), 191–192.

ment of rural girls was shaped by a concurrent demographic growth of rural populations, land fragmentation and redistributions which resulted in increased poverty in rural areas, and the simultaneous expansion of the urban service sector. In the Balkans, the lower number of older servants suggests that for most, domestic work was considered a temporary occupation with the intent to accumulate some money for dowry.⁸² In contrast to the 19th-century women servants from Plovdiv who received payment in kind and in money, early 20th-century examples point to a trend towards monetization of their salaries. Often young girls worked for their dowry until the age of marriage, when their spatial mobility ceased.

All these cases serve to illustrate both short and long-term mobility of domestic workers from nearby local villages to urban centers and, more rarely, from one urban location to another. In the Balkan agrarian context, mobility was affected by a slow transition to industrialization and the availability of a few factory jobs, while at the same time domestic service was an expanding form of female paid labor. In tandem with the growth of incipient middle classes, the latter became specialized and commodified. Employment in upper and middle-class homes contributed significantly to domestic servants' socialization into urban culture, adulthood, and marriage, but at the same time reinforced old and added new layers of social and gender disparities. The patriarchy in both urban and rural settings was thus preserved, and the dissimilar opportunities for social mobility available to both male apprentices and maidservants speak quite eloquently to those preexisting gender inequalities. Female domestic service did not require education while scribes' and apprentices' upward mobility was based on acquiring higher literacy levels. Hence access to education continued to be withheld from most girls, but especially from those in poor villages. Additionally, servants' jobs became extensively feminized and thus devalued, leading to lower earnings. Moreover, the young Balkan states established a strong connection between domestic service, mobility, wages, and moral concerns, and thus the uneven blend of gender and class was reproduced at institutional levels.

Conclusion

Mobility is a complex phenomenon which is “imbued with meaning and power,” as Tim Cresswell has aptly suggested.⁸³ Along the same lines, this article attempts to show various forms of non-linear mobility in the 19th-century Balkan context, some

⁸² Hionidou, *Domestic Service*, (2006), 479; on the persistent institution of the dowry, see also Evdoxios Doxiadis, *Women, Wealth, and the State in Greece (1750–1860)*, in: Evguenia Davidova (ed.), *Wealth in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman Balkans: A Socio-Economic History*, London 2016, 9–30.

⁸³ Tim Cresswell (ed.), *On the Move. Mobility in the Modern Western World*, New York 2006, 4.

of them occurring in synchronicity with other parts of Europe, others more specific to the Balkan agrarian societies that transitioned from imperial domination to competing nation-states throughout the century.⁸⁴ The two groups of peripatetic workers examined here share some common traits. First, both acquired skills on the job and performed economic tasks through various forms of mobility. Second, through their physical movements they interacted with representatives of different social strata and ethno-religious groups. Whereas most of these developments were also common European trends, the workings of the Ottoman Empire offered exposure to multiethnic communities and networks. Consequently, many of those mobile workers participated in increased communication and the transmission of intercultural skills.

With respect to differences, the social origins of the mobile workers under consideration in this article were mixed. While maidservants and apprentices were of poor rural origin, some of the aides came from middle-class families, and were often sons of merchants seeking to accumulate experience in big cities. The purposes of their travels also varied: the aides performed business (and in some cases political) tasks for their masters. The maids were driven by poverty and the necessity to earn their dowries in order to become marriageable, according to the existing patriarchal standards.⁸⁵ Multiple factors shaped these differences: the mobility of male aides was stimulated by economic shifts in the Ottoman Empire, such that commerce had become the “royal road” to accumulation of wealth and the possibility of social reclassification. This explains why clerks had the best prospects for spatial and social mobility. On the other hand, the underdeveloped urban service sector did not provide the same range of opportunities for women servants, who in most cases were also illiterate. Thus a combination of economic underdevelopment, lack of available compulsory education, and oppression within patriarchal regimes restricted options for upward mobility among single working women.

Such multidirectional and return mobility was more vibrant within the Ottoman imperial framework than the successor states. When their fixed borders were established, the opportunities inherent in kinetic lives decreased for some of these groups and social control over them increased. The loss of work for apprentices due to the decline of guilds is a case in point. Domestic service, on the other hand, continued to grow as the middle class expanded and employment of servants became a marker

84 On the issue of the “relative synchronicity of eastern and western Europe within a *longue durée* framework,” see Maria Todorova, *The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism*, *Slavic Review*, 64/1 (2005), 147.

85 In many cases, they did not actually control their dowries until the death of their husband and father. Maria Bucur, *To Have and to Hold: Gender Regimes and Property Rights in the Romanian Principalities before World War I*, *European History Quarterly*, 48/4 (2018), 613–614.

of higher social status among the emerging national bourgeoisies. In the meantime, the modern state amplified its regulatory functions over this labor force. The commercial scribes also underwent a transformation: many of them joined the swelling world of state administration and transferred their managerial skills to their new occupations. Most merchants kept their businesses but the loss of the huge Ottoman markets, the increase of European competition, and the expansion of modern industry diminished the need for mobile traders' aides and by the end of the 19th century the requirements for aide work became more sedentary and specialized. And yet gender disparities remained, and while respectable middle-class women gained more opportunities to travel, they also faced fewer employment options. Meanwhile, women of rural, migrant, and humble urban origin continued to fill the ranks of low-paid domestic service and factory jobs. In both cases, access to education and reinforcement of patriarchal norms under the scrutiny of the modern state favored male labor and social mobility.

In summary, by integrating a study of labor mobility, class, and gender as categories of analysis, this article identifies migrations as multidirectional social phenomena. It also includes voices from lesser-known Balkan actors in the European chorus and examines their mobility within the natural context of their work and daily lives, as far as sources permit. All peripatetic groups were involved in some form of economic activity by either producing and selling goods or working in the expanding urban service sector. Therefore, they not only physically moved within this environment but also transformed it and were themselves changed by participating in complex inter-regional, intra-regional, trans-cultural, and multiethnic networks. The variety of nonlinear short and long-term mobility, usually understated in migration literature, seems to have been a more widespread phenomenon that both contributed to and resulted from the expansion of markets, state regulation, gender and socio-economic disparity, cultural amalgamation, and early anti-migration discourses and practices.